

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, January 20, 2012

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE posts technology-grant application, registration information for February 11 [technology conference](#)
2. Commissioner's [letter to teachers](#) attached, for distribution across all LEAs – **Action Item**
3. Educators invited to webinar on RIDE request for [flexibility under ESEA](#)/NCLB – **Action Item**

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

4. Seniors encouraged to apply for [National Youth Science Camp](#)
5. [Teacher-Course-Student data](#) due this month – **Action Item**
6. [Roster Verification](#) training scheduled for teachers, principals
7. RIDE to conduct surveys, webinars, regional meetings for [feedback on the Rhode Island Model](#)
8. Module 3 and Module 4 [trainings for evaluators](#) to begin in March
9. Webinars to support [Common Core](#) State Standards implementation begin Thursday
10. Opportunity to participate in the 2012 NECAP [Online Writing Pilot](#) announced
11. Student, Teacher/Staff, Administrator [SurveyWorks](#) surveys to begin January 30

Attachments to this field memo:

Letter to Teachers & Principals 1-20-12

Action Item Calendar

- January 25: RIDE to contact all LEAs that have not submitted TCS data (see below)
- January 27: Distribute letter to teachers and principals (see below)
- January 27: Distribute invitation to RIDE webinar on ESEA flexibility (see below)
- February 1: [Green Ribbon Schools](#) nomination deadline
- February 1: [Personal Literacy Plan](#) data-submission deadline
- February 11: Statewide conference on [Innovation Powered by Technology](#)
- June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)
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Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE posts technology-grant application, registration information for February 11 technology conference

One of the topics that comes up all the time as I meet with students, educators, parents, and community members is the use of technology in our schools. I'm very excited that we are moving forward with our plan to use technology to transform education in Rhode Island. As I noted to you in the Field Memo last week, we will award a \$470,000 grant this spring for Innovation Powered by Technology. We will award the grant to an LEA, on a competitive basis, for a proposal to transform a school through the use of technology. The school would launch the transformation this fall and refine the process during the 2013-14 school year. We have posted the grant application on our website here:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/1to1_home.aspx

I hope that you will lead your LEA in assembling a team made up of administrators, technology directors, teachers, students, and other interested stakeholders that will help develop a first-class proposal for using technology to transform schools. To help you and your team write the best possible grant proposal and to spark a statewide conversation about technology and education, we will hold a day-long conference on Innovation Powered by Technology on February 11, at Rhode Island College. I hope that you and members of your team will attend the conference, where a number of experts from across the country will share their thoughts and ideas with us. The conference has a limited number of open spots, so we are requiring preregistration. Please register as soon as possible so that you don't lose this opportunity to join the conversation on technology. We have posted registration information, along with a list of speakers, here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/OMP/VL/TechOps/1to1/2012conference.aspx>

2. Commissioner's letter to teachers, principals attached, for distribution across all LEAs – Action Item

As we move forward with our work toward transforming education in Rhode Island, I know that all of us are aware of the importance of great communications and of working partnerships based on shared goals and mutual trust. In particular, I want to maintain open lines of communications with Rhode Island teachers and principals, and I hope that you can help me in this regard. During the current school year, I plan to send monthly communications to all Rhode Island teachers and principals. Because I do not have e-mail addresses for all educators in a single database, I have asked the RISSA executive board for help in dissemination of messages to teachers and principals. The leadership proposed that I send these messages to you, through the Field Memo, and that I ask for your help in distributing these messages. I am attaching a "Letter to Teachers & Principals 1-20-12" to this Field Memo, and I hope that you will be able to distribute this letter *by the end of next week (January 27)* to the teachers and principals in your LEA. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about this request.

3. Educators invited to webinar on RIDE request for flexibility under ESEA/NCLB – Action Item

On Thursday, January 19, RIDE held an information meeting with superintendents and assistant superintendents on the draft of our request for flexibility under ESEA/NCLB. We continue to seek input as we prepare to submit the request to the U.S. Department of Education next month.

To that end, we would like to solicit input from all Rhode Island educators. *Please pass this invitation on this week to your district and school administrators and teachers:*

We invite you to join a RIDE webinar for educators on our request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), on Monday, January 30, from 5 to 7 p.m. Deputy Commissioner David V. Abbott will present an overview of our draft request, and there will be an opportunity for you to ask questions and give your input on the draft. You may [click here to register for this webinar](#). Once you register, you will automatically receive an e-mail with instructions on how to join the webinar.

Additionally, RIDE will hold a public forum, Wednesday, February 1, from 6 to 8 p.m., at Riverside Middle School, 179 Forbes St., East Providence, on our request for flexibility, which we will submit to the U.S. Department of Education next month.

We have posted a [draft of our flexibility request](#) on our website.

We welcome you and your team to join us at the forum if your schedules permit.

We also welcome you to review the draft of our request, if you have not already done so. You can submit any comments about the request to ESEA.Flex@ride.ri.gov.

From RIDE:

4. Seniors encouraged to apply for National Youth Science Camp

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

Rhode Island high-school seniors with a strong interest in science are encouraged to apply for the National Youth Science Camp (NYSC). The NYSC is a residential science-education program that honors and challenges two graduating high-school science students from each state and others from selected countries around the world. Scientists from across the nation present lectures and hands-on science seminars and linger to interact informally with student delegates. Delegates are challenged to explore new areas in the biological and physical sciences, art, and music with resident staff members. Opportunities are provided for delegates to present seminars covering their own areas of interest and research. A visit to Washington, D.C., permits delegates to visit some of the nation's premier scientific, governmental, and cultural facilities. The

NYSC experience includes overnight excursions into the Monongahela National Forest, in West Virginia, featuring backpacking, rock-climbing, caving, mountain-biking, and kayaking opportunities. Delegates are required to participate in the camp program for its entirety, as the fast-paced activities and remote location make travel to and from the NYSC very difficult. Applications are due February 17. To download application materials or to learn more about NYSC, visit:

<http://2012.nysc.org/delegates/apply/>.

For further information, feel free to contact Peter McLaren, at 222-8454, or by e-mail at peter.mclaren@ride.ri.gov.

5. Teacher-Course-Student data due this month – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Division of Fiscal Integrity and Efficiencies:

As you may be aware, the Teacher-Course-Student (TCS) data collection began on January 3 and must be completed by **February 1** in order for the roster-verification process (see Field Memo item below) to begin. We really appreciate all your hard work on this crucial collection process, as the data are also required for many of the Race To The Top initiatives.

If you have not submitted your TCS data by **Wednesday**, a senior RIDE staff member will reach out to you directly to determine what steps you can take to ensure that your LEA meets this important deadline.

6. Roster Verification training scheduled for teachers, principals

Please see this notice from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness:

Roster Verification (RV) is the process through which teachers and principals verify which students are in which teachers' classes. This process is critical in ensuring the accuracy of teacher-course-student (TCS) data, which will be used in the new IMS, EPSS, and GMV data systems being developed under Race to the Top, as well as for educator evaluations. We appreciate your help in ensuring that your principals and teachers participate in the appropriate trainings and are prepared for the RV.

Key Roster Verification Process Dates:

- Principal Review of Teachers and Sections: Thursday, February 2 – Tuesday, February 7
- Teacher Roster Verification and Sign-Off: Wednesday, February 8 – Friday, February 17
- Principal School-wide Roster Sign-off: Wednesday, February 29 – Friday, March 9

In preparation for the RV process beginning on February 2, RIDE is developing trainings for teachers and principals with RV responsibilities. These trainings apply to:

- all teachers who are contributing educators for ELA or mathematics in grades 3 - 7;
- “teachers of record” for ELA or mathematics in grades 3 – 7; and
- principals with grades 3 - 7 in their schools.

Teachers will be able to access a pre-recorded instructional video through the RIDE website that will guide them in their RV responsibilities and will demonstrate how to use the RV tool. On Monday, this video and associated guidance will be posted on:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/RosterVerification/TeacherTrainingVideo/>.

Principals will have the option of participating in one of three live webinars that will train them on their RV responsibilities and on how to use the RV tool. The content of these webinars will be identical, and the webinars will be recorded for principals who are unable to attend on the scheduled dates. The dates and registration links for the principal webinars are:

- **Wednesday** (January 25), 3 - 5 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/719810494>
- January 27, 12 - 2 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/789037502>
- January 31, 3 - 5 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/852318838>

Please encourage your principals to register for one of these webinars. Additionally, RIDE will offer “virtual office hours” for principals and eRIDE helpdesk supports for all educators accessing the system. More information about these resources will be forthcoming.

If you have any questions, please contact Jan Mermin, at jan.mermin@ride.ri.gov.

7. RIDE to conduct surveys, webinars, regional meetings for feedback on the Rhode Island Model

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

RIDE will be sending a link to an online teacher survey to LEAs implementing the Rhode Island Educator Evaluation Model. The survey will ask teachers questions about their experiences with the Rhode Island Model, as well as about their perspective on evaluation systems in general. We have been collecting feedback from teachers in our two early-adopter districts (Jamestown and Warwick), and this survey will help us capture a broader perspective. Responses to this survey will help us understand how practitioners experience evaluation and how the Rhode Island Model Educator Evaluation System can be improved. The link for the survey will be included in an upcoming Field Memo to enable LEAs to send it to all of their teachers.

RIDE will also be hosting two webinars and four regional meetings with superintendents, building union leaders, and principals to collect feedback on the Rhode Island Model. The webinars and regional meetings are part of a larger effort to collect feedback on the Rhode Island Model to inform model refinement. RIDE is committed to capitalizing on the best thinking educators in Rhode Island have to offer in order to improve the Rhode Island Model in preparation for full implementation during the next school year. Additional information about the webinars and regional meetings will be included in an upcoming Field Memo.

8. Module 3 and Module 4 trainings for evaluators to begin in March

Please see this notice from our Office of Educator Quality and Certification:

Module 3 for Personnel Evaluating Building Administrators is being offered eight times between March 6 and April 11. Module 4 for Personnel Evaluating Teachers is being offered 28 times between March 12 and April 25. Both trainings will focus on preparing for End-of-Year Conferences. Evaluators can register by going to the eRIDE Workshop calendar, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/applications/ridecalendar.aspx>.

9. Webinars to support Common Core State Standards implementation begin Thursday

Please see this announcement from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) has issued an invitation to educators to participate in a new series of webinars to support all states in Common Core State Standards implementation.

The first webinar will take place on **Thursday** (January 26), from 2 - 3 p.m. The purpose is to share tools and resources to support teachers and districts on text complexity, which is the linchpin of the ELA standards. The webinar will feature Sue Pimentel, a member of the Common Core State Standards English language arts writing committee, as well as representatives from the Kansas and Louisiana Departments of Education. All materials and a recording of the webinar will be available on the CCSSO website after the event. Anyone is welcome to register and attend this free webinar.

CCSSO will be hosting additional Common Core implementation webinars throughout the year. The following webinars have been scheduled, and a complete schedule will be posted shortly:

- February 23, 2 p.m.: Communications with Different Audiences - CCSSO will release a series of customizable one-page handouts to communicate the Common Core State Standards quickly and easily with district leaders, legislators, and other audiences.
- March 22, 2 p.m.: Engaging Higher Education

To register for the January 26 event, please visit the CCSSO webinar series home page, at:

<https://ccsso.webex.com/ccsso/onstage/g.php?p=22&t=m>.

Recordings of webinars will also be posted to the CCSSO home page after each event.

10. Opportunity to participate in the 2012 NECAP Online Writing Pilot announced

Please see the following message from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE is pleased to announce an opportunity for schools to participate in this year's NECAP Online Writing Pilot for grades 8 and 11. Following a very successful first year with online writing in 2011, we are expanding this program to provide additional schools with the chance to participate. By moving toward online testing, we hope to provide greater fidelity between writing in the classroom and writing for assessment.

In the spring of 2011, 70 schools across all 4 NECAP states were selected to participate in the Online Writing Pilot. Those that successfully administered the pilot test were invited to administer the operational online test in the fall of 2011.

In order for a school to participate in the NECAP Writing test online this fall, the school must first participate in the spring pilot test, which is made up of NECAP Writing released items. Because the primary purpose of the pilot is to test each school's ability to administer an online assessment, scores from student pilot-test work will not be returned. However, if a school successfully completes the pilot test and participates in the fall 2012 online NECAP Writing test, then student work from this administration will be returned to the school.

The dates for this year's Online Writing Pilot are March 26 - 30 and April 2 - 6.

Note: There are certain technical requirements that must be met in order to be considered for participation. If you are interested in having a school in your school or a school in your LEA participate in the Online Writing Pilot, please e-mail Dr. Kevon Tucker-Seeley, at Kevon.Tucker-Seeley@ride.ri.gov, and request a copy of the information you'll need to determine if your school is eligible for participation.

If, after reading the requirements, you believe your school or the school in your LEA would be eligible for inclusion in the pilot, please contact Dr. Tucker-Seeley for further instructions. The deadline for applying for participation in the Online Writing Pilot is **February 15**.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Tucker-Seeley (kevon.tucker-seeley@ride.ri.gov, or 222-8494).

11. Student, Teacher/Staff, Administrator SurveyWorks surveys to begin January 30

Please see the following announcement from our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

Thank you for your efforts to get SurveyWorks, our Education Survey Suite for 2012, off to a strong start. The Parent Survey began on January 5 and will be open until February 16. This survey is open to all parents of public-school students in preschool through grade 12. Parents can take the survey online at www.surveyworks.ride.ri.gov or by requesting a paper survey from their child's school.

We want to take this opportunity to inform you of the next key events in this year's SurveyWorks schedule and to ask for your support. Beginning January 30, the Student (grades 4 - 12), Teacher/Staff, and Administrator Surveys will open. These surveys will run through March 15. Students will take the survey online from school computers. The Administrator and Teacher/Staff Surveys will also take place online, but the surveys can be taken anytime from any computer or internet-accessible device.

Site coordinators at each school have been working hard to promote the surveys and to increase parent participation in the Parent Survey. Our goal is to increase response rates across the state so as to allow all schools to have high-quality, actionable data that can be used to help improve education at school and district levels. Some ways you can help promote the SurveyWorks surveys in your district include:

- sending out auto dial messages to parents reminding them to participate in the survey;
- promoting the SurveyWorks Surveys in newsletters and weekly e-mails and by posting information on the district web page;
- having your district's IT department work with schools to make sure that students have access to computers to complete the survey and that survey links are posted on the school web page;
- encouraging principals to post flyers about the Parent and Teacher/Staff Surveys around their schools;
- writing letters to staff and parents encouraging survey participation for schools to distribute;
- providing opportunities to parents to take the survey at upcoming school events;
- hosting a district-wide competition and reward the schools or classrooms with the highest parent-response rates; and
- partnering with local media outlets to promote the survey.

With your help, we can increase survey participation and provide better data for schools in your district.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jan Mermin, at 222-4710 or jan.mermin@ride.ri.gov, or you can contact the SurveyWorks Team directly, at 877-787-5725, or surveyworks@wested.org.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>